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——— veteresque reducere quæstûs.
STATIUS.

An old complaint.

At so advanced a period of the world as the present, when intelligence, information, and science meet us wherever we turn our inquiring eyes; when talent,

developed by the aid of so many auspicious circumstances, seems ready to lend its assistance, and exert its powers, in every corner of the civilized globe; at such an era of intellectual splendor, the very name of a literary recluse, conveys to the mind sensations of wonder mingled with pity, and pity blended with contempt. we must raise our voice of accusation against the children of darkness in an age of light: who perceive the benefits which they will not use, and acknowledge privileges which they will not adopt.

among the practices, recommended by philosophy, and enforced by example, none seems, by the sanction of the wisest and the best of men, to command a more reverential res-

pect, than that collision of mind, and concentration of the faculties, which mutual conflict particularly tends to produce. The deliberating, and the solitary, who recede from social intercourse, and prefer to meditate alone, have spent ~~hours~~ days in modelling in the closet, what an hour in public would overthrow; & doubted in private over opinions which never met with contradiction, because opportunity never offered for discussion. And yet none raise the cry of distress with shriller tone, than those who have trusted what none but themselves ever saw in secret, to the impartial sentence of the multitude, and find what they never expected, that sentiments are opposed, where they never dreamt of objection, and facts questioned, where they never thought

of refutation.

That talent which will not bear the conflict of contending intellects, however covered with external show, is factitious throughout, and unsubstantial as the cloud that passeth away. This has been settled by long right, and established proof. The information that cannot be applied, the notions that cannot be explained, and the ideas which cannot be unravelled, when necessity calls for examination, are sufficient indications, if not of a muddy brain, at any rate, of an unsound mind.

The literary heroes in the days of Johnson, were well enough aware of the advantages of intellectual exertion in the order of stubborn disputation; and accordingly

adopted such a plan as might ensure the enjoyment of those profitable amusements, whose benefits they so readily perceived. In the social assembly, relaxed from the stemness of more rigid avocations, and freed from the restraints of necessary labor, they called forth, in harmless satire, and innocent mirth, in unbridged criticism, and open discussion, the mighty energies of mind, and the exhaustless resources of wit: while emulation and honor, elation in victory, and disappointment in defeat, all served to enkindle into a brighter flame, the fire which burned in every agitated bosom, and issued from every enraptured tongue.

Yet, in these enviable seasons of festive pleasure,

no frantic rage, or rankling jealousies, shed a gloom over the ~~the~~ glowing scene, or diminished the general satisfaction by the introduction of temporary sorrow. So that the plea can never be urged, that danger rather than manly spirit, & revenge rather than mental energy, are the not unfrequent results of associations formed for literary discussion, and cemented by union of talent.

To be a wilful stranger, for any permanent time, to the sight and knowledge of the enlightened and the wise, is to shut out those rays of glory which the hand of the Creator has diffused for the blessing of man; to encompass those who grope in the dark-

wefs of error, or toil through the mazes of folly. Each laboring in that work which his inclinations have disposed, and his affections have loved, may find in the long course of his minute inquiries, and studied speculations, truths which others have never attained, and results to which others have never arrived. Some happy conception, some peculiar situation, or unexpected circumstance, in the revolution of a moment has obtained, what learning has sought for, and never found, what genius has investigated, and never solved.

But the disquisitions of the theorist, may be said, most of all, to stand in need of the zeal and wor-

rant of superior minds. If more on this precarious side of the grave are beyond the reach of ~~a~~fallibility, what visionary philosopher would try the chances of a fixed decision, resting on the tottering basis of his own belief? Amid the vast diversity of opinions and systems, which the ~~sages~~ of this world have formed and instituted, whose constitute the standard of correct judgment, whose are conformable to the dictates of reason? And what is real, which of these numberless fruits of human research, resemble the objects of our own sanguinary hopes? Surely, if all differ, many must be wrong: and why plunge into the gulph where ~~thousands~~ thousands have fallen, before

time has afforded us an opportunity of committing confidence in other intellects than our own, & in other arbiters than ourselves. ?^

But we will put our subject in another light. Does feeling lend no spur to the efforts of the mind? The warfare we would encourage, calls into action the dormant energies of the soul, and the slumbering vigor of the genius. The race is animated, because the stake is mighty; and great are the labors, because important are the issues. Success must crown the combatant, whose diligence seconds his powers, & whose perseverance advances his wishes.

Now others, doubt-

lefs, have contended with equal earnestness for that which we have been so strenuously advising. Amidst the universal clamor in its behalf, no doubt the sound has reached the limit of these Western shores. But where are the fruits to be seen, since reformation has not yet begun? The fact is, that neither by literary institutions, nor any other method of gathering together the talent which lies scattered around, do we imitate the illustrious models of our European predeceſſors. The societies already in operation, are either the creatures of boyish inexperience, or intricate science. But we still want another

where readiness of talent may be more especially cultivated, quickness of argument, and fluency of reply. All can study, and then tell what they have studied, or write, and then read what they have written on paper. But declamation is too common for us to wish it to be increased, and too easy to be a source of difficulty.

But we fear very much that the happy object we desire, will not soon be realised to our wishes, while the present apathy continues to prevail. We shall never be gratified

with the accomplishment of our plan, till those whose business it peculiarly is to alarm the project, arouse from the sleep they have so long enjoyed, and begin to think a little more of the public, and a little less of themselves.

Q.